

Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee
Orientation Session
February 9, 2009, 3:00 – 7:30pm
City Hall, Bertha Landes Room or Boards and Commissions Room
600 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, WA 98124

Neighborhood Planning in Seattle

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The Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, is a 20-year policy plan designed to articulate a vision of how Seattle will grow in ways that sustain its citizens' values. The City first adopted this plan in 1994 in response to the state Growth Management Act of 1990.

The Comprehensive Plan makes basic policy choices and provides a flexible framework for adapting to real conditions over time. It is a collection of the goals and policies the City uses to guide decisions about how much growth Seattle should take and where it should be located. The Comprehensive Plan also describes in a general way how the City will address the effects of growth on transportation and other City facilities.

The initial building blocks of the Comprehensive Plan are the "elements" required by the state's Growth Management Act: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities and utilities. The City's plan also includes elements addressing neighborhood planning, human development, and the environment.

When the Comprehensive Plan was first adopted, it introduced an urban village strategy as the fundamental approach for accepting new growth. This strategy strove to focus the expected growth and supporting public services, like transit and libraries, into designated urban centers and urban villages. Urban centers are planned to be the densest, mixed-use neighborhoods, having high concentrations of both jobs and housing. The original plan identified five urban centers: Downtown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, Uptown, University District and Northgate.

Additionally, the plan identified 25 urban villages, that also allow both commercial and residential growth, but at lower densities than the urban centers. These include places like Lake City, Ballard, Columbia City and Admiral. Overall, the urban centers and villages were projected to take about 75% of the city's household growth during the plan's life. The plan also designated two manufacturing/industrial centers—the Duwamish and Interbay—where only industrial job growth is expected. Together, these places served as the focus for the neighborhood planning effort of the late 1990s.

The neighborhood planning process began in 1995 with Resolution 29015 calling for a partnership between the City and its neighborhoods to improve the quality of life while embracing the City's Urban Village Strategy. This planning process was both a bottom-up and a top-down process. Neighborhoods established their criteria and guidelines and the City outlined goals and established procedures for neighborhood planning. The City emphasized the importance of inclusivity in the neighborhood planning process.

Neighborhood planning occurred in phases beginning with pre-application. A neighborhood community council or chamber came forward with the application and demonstrated an ability to develop an inclusive process for neighborhood planning. Following this, the neighborhoods were given some money to develop an outreach strategy and define their top priorities for a plan. After the outreach strategy was documented and objectives were identified, neighborhoods focused on providing recommendations to

address their priorities and created neighborhood plans.

In total, 39 plans were created and they varied considerably from neighborhood to neighborhood. The City allowed for flexibility in the organization of the plans, but was strict about the format of an approval/adoption matrix. This matrix defined the neighborhood planning recommendations, established criteria, identified parties responsible for implementation, and recorded City comments. Each neighborhood was required to develop this matrix.

In 1999, the first neighborhood planning process concluded with the City Council's adoption of broad policies from each neighborhood plan into the Comprehensive Plan chapter on Neighborhood Plans. Since this time, significant change has occurred in Seattle and The Executive and City Council have agreed that it is now time to review the status of and update Neighborhood Plans that were prepared 8 to 10 years ago.